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Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

7144th meeting

Wednesday, 19 March 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Lucas	(Luxembourg)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Errázuriz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Mr. Omaish
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedures, I invite Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, and I give him the floor.

Mr. Eliasson: My statement today will briefly focus on the continuing efforts of the United Nations with regard to the crisis in Ukraine and the latest developments on Ukraine since the briefing to the Council by Under-Secretary-General Feltman on 13 March (see S/PV.7134).

The Secretary-General is today on his way to Moscow and Kyiv as part of his ongoing and intensified good offices efforts. He will pursue discussions in both capitals on political and diplomatic solutions to the crisis. Ahead of his trip, this morning he spoke to Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatsenyuk.

Since the most recent briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.7134), the Secretary-General has continued to engage with key actors with the aim of de-escalating the situation. He has unfailingly urged dialogue and promoted adherence to the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter in relation to Ukraine, such as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and ensuring the fulfilment of the human rights of all, with particular attention to minorities.

During my recent mission to Ukraine, I stressed the importance of an inclusive Government and the need to preserve a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual Ukraine with all my interlocutors. As the Council has seen from his public statements, the Secretary-General has repeatedly counselled against hasty actions that could increase tensions and lead to miscalculations and unintended consequences.

My mission to Ukraine was followed by that of Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović. At the request of the Secretary-General, given the volatility of the situation on the ground, Mr. Šimonović extended his visit to Ukraine until yesterday, 18 March.

In the meantime, a United Nations human rights monitoring mission is being deployed in Ukraine in order to provide an objective assessment as to what is happening on the ground. Mr. Šimonović will take the floor after me to brief the Council on his visit to Ukraine and provide further information on the work of the monitoring mission. I can add that the United Nations has closely coordinated our efforts with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in view of OSCE plans to also deploy monitors to Ukraine.

I wish to recall that, during my mission to Ukraine, I briefed the Council on 4 March from Kyiv. I reported encountering a country grappling with a series of fast-moving and serious political, security and economic challenges.

Since that mission, the crisis appears only to have deepened. Instead of de-escalation, tensions in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine continue to rise. The Crimean authorities decided to hold a referendum on Crimea's status on 16 March, after which they announced that close to 97 per cent of those who voted did so in favour of Crimea's secession from Ukraine. The Secretary-General expressed his deep disappointment and concern over the hasty decision to proceed with a referendum with regard to an issue of such far-reaching consequences for Ukraine, the region and beyond. Subsequently, Crimea declared its independence, which in turn was recognized by the Russian Federation.

On 17 March, the European Union and the United States proceeded to apply targeted sanctions against Russian and Crimean officials. On 18 March, President Putin signed a treaty, which the Parliament of the Russian Federation is expected to begin ratifying, in order to make Crimea part of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the Government in Kyiv has committed to never accepting Crimea's independence

or annexation, stating that Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine.

Yesterday, Ukraine's Prime Minister expressed concern that the conflict in the Crimean peninsula was "shifting from a political to a military stage". That followed reports that a Ukrainian officer haad been killed in front of a Ukrainian military base on the outskirts of Simferopol.

Following that incident, the Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister made plans to travel to Crimea today. In turn, the Crimean leadership has allegedly stated that Ukraine's officials would be turned back. That underscores the dire need for the immediate opening of direct dialogue between Moscow and Kyiv.

Today, reports are emerging that two Ukrainian naval bases in Crimea have been taken over by pro-Russian forces or unidentified groups. While initial reports suggest that the seizure of bases has so far occurred without bloodshed, such developments obviously carry grave risks. The Secretary-General has constantly underlined the importance of avoiding further provocative actions and of refraining from incitement.

Those latest events have heightened tensions and added new layers of complexity to an already precarious situation. We are now faced with risks of a dangerous further escalation that could have ramifications for international peace and security and have serious significance for the Council and for the United Nations.

In a broader perspective, we should recall that the Russian Federation and Ukraine remain neighbours, with close and often complex historic, cultural, economic and political ties. It is our view that it is in the interests of us all that those two nations have positive ties with each other and with the broader region. However, the first step in that direction has to be based on an immediate de-escalation and restraint in the present crisis.

I would like to conclude by quoting some of the Secretary-General's key messages recently:

> "It is clear that we are at a crossroads. If positions continue to harden and rhetoric continues to sharpen, there is great risk of a dangerous downward spiral;
>
> "The focus must be to engage in direct dialogue between Moscow and Kyiv, aimed at agreeing on specific measures that will pave the way towards a diplomatic solution;
>
> "Although it has so far proved elusive, the path towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis is still open."

It is in that spirit and in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations that he now embarks on his mission to Moscow and Kyiv.

I wish only to add that our primary diplomatic tool is constructive dialogue on the basis of Chapter VI of the Charter on the pacific settlement of disputes. The United Nations will continue to play its role of promoting dialogue for a peaceful and joint resolution of the crisis, which now has become more serious than ever.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Eliasson for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Šimonović.

Mr. Šimonović: I thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on my mission to Ukraine. I joined the Deputy Secretary-General in Kyiv on 9 March at the urgent request of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. My mandate was to make an initial assessment of the human rights situation, to highlight the critical importance of respect for human rights in working towards the de-escalation of tensions, and to make recommendations on the way forward.

I met with individuals from across the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and political spectrums in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Lviv, including legislative and executive officials, the Ombudsperson, civil society organizations representing various communities, including victims of human rights violations, as well as members of regional organizations and the diplomatic community. My team also collected numerous written materials.

I was not able to go to Crimea, as the authorities there initially would not receive the mission or ensure its security. Eventually, on Sunday, I received an invitation to visit Simferopol. I hope that a visit to Crimea, possibly by the head of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission, Mr. Armen Harutyunyan, will soon take place. I also welcome the request made on 19 March by the Independent Expert on the minority issues to visit Ukraine. I hope that the mission will take place as soon as possible and contribute to decreasing tensions.

Chronic human rights violations were among the major reasons for the upheaval in Ukraine in recent months. For many years, there have been concerns about the weak rule of law, the lack of accountability and resulting impunity. The right to a fair trial, equal access to justice, cases of torture, ill-treatment and poor detention conditions are all matters of long-standing concern. The lack of independence of the judiciary must be remedied and the reform of the security sector and of the Prosecutor's Office are also urgent tasks. Corruption is a cross-cutting problem that affects the rule of law, as well as equal access to public services, and also needs to be addressed swiftly.

All reforms and new policy measures must be adopted without any spirit of revenge and in a consultative, transparent and inclusive manner. It is crucial to ensure that one does not respond to human rights violations with other human rights violations. In the context of ongoing legislative measures concerning lustration, those must fully respect human rights and the rule of law, including the right to individual review and to appeal.

Let me now move to protest-related violations. In the context of the recent protests in Kyiv and elsewhere, I am deeply concerned about alleged gross human rights violations, including the excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings, torture, disappearances and arbitrary arrests and detentions. The actions of snipers on the Maidan are of particularly grave concern and need to be fully investigated. More than 100 people, mostly protesters, but also some members of the security forces, have also lost their lives and many more were injured. I visited protest-related victims in the hospital. I also spoke to physicians who helped victims in makeshift hospitals, including the current Minister of Health, Mr. Oleh Musiy, and Ms. Olga Bogomolets. All of them confirmed that sniper killings of protesters were undertaken in the style of an execution, in which heads and chests were targeted. The perpetrators of those and other human rights violations against all victims must be promptly brought to justice, whatever their background, status or affiliation, following independent, impartial and thorough investigations.

Let me turn now to the ongoing violations and the way to address them. I have urged all the authorities I encountered to ensure inclusivity in governance and, while ensuring freedom of expression, to curb hate speech. Ukraine is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural country. Nationalistic rhetoric and policies will be counterproductive and will further deepen the internal dividing lines within society. All views should be expressed freely in a democracy, as long as their expression does not incite hatred and violence against others. Any attempt to escalate the violence and hatred should be prevented, or stopped when it has occurred, before it escalates into further violence. It is incumbent upon all authorities to ensure equal protection for all, especially for minority groups.

The hasty repeal of the law on languages by Parliament was a mistake. The decision of Parliament was fortunately not approved by the acting President, so that the old law will continue to be in force while a new text is prepared. That process should be done in full consultation with all concerned and be fully participatory, transparent and inclusive.

During my visit, I met with a wide range of representatives of civil society, including with representatives of ethnic Russians. There seem to be some cases where members of the Russian minority have been harassed or even attacked, such as in the case of the attack against a member of Parliament. All allegations of human rights violations, in particular against minorities, have to be thoroughly investigated. However, it seems that those violations are neither widespread nor systematic.

I have serious concerns about the situation in Crimea, which remains tense with respect to the protection of human rights. I have met with victims of arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment and other human rights violations. I spoke to representatives of displaced Tatar persons in Lviv, Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, Mr. Refat Chubarov, and Mr. Nadir Bekirov, President of the Foundation for Research and Support of Indigenous Peoples of Crimea. I am deeply concerned about the human rights of those who oppose the recent political events in Crimea. It has been reported that a local Crimean Tatar activist who disappeared after participating in a protest on 3 March was found dead on 16 March in a forest near the town of Belogorsk. According to reports from credible sources, his body bore marks that suggest he had been subjected to mistreatment.

In addition to cases of violence between various political Ukrainian and Russian groups, with the alleged participation of groups from outside of the region, resulting in recent deaths and injuries, the spreading of rumours, including through the media, particularly in eastern Ukraine, is adding to a sense of insecurity

among the population. I understand that this is partly due to rumours and perceptions about whether the new authorities in Kyiv would ensure decentralization policies, an inclusive Government and protect and support the use of the Russian language.

There is an urgent need for independent monitors to objectively assess and report on human rights violations, as well as on the implications of recent events and to monitor the current human rights situation throughout the country. An independent, objective establishment of the facts and circumstances surrounding alleged human rights violations can help investigation, can prevent further occurrences and can counter the spread of false information.

We have received a request from the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to dispatch human rights monitors, and we have immediately begun their deployment. The team will be composed of 9 international and approximately 25 national staff. The head of the human rights monitoring mission arrived last week, and others are gradually joining him. By Friday, monitors will be in place in Kharkiv and in Donetsk.

In the roll-out of that mission, we will work very closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has plans for a larger monitoring mission. Both the Deputy Secretary-General and I have maintained close contacts with the OSCE leadership in that regard, and that will be replicated on the ground.

The United Nations stands ready to help ensure human rights are respected and protected in Ukraine with the support of international and regional organizations, including the OSCE, the Council of Europe and others. In addition to monitoring the human rights situation, the United Nations can assist by providing technical assistance for legislative and other reforms necessary to ensure that the recommendations received by Ukraine from United Nations human rights mechanisms are fully implemented so that they can effectively contribute to both peace and development efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Šimonović for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): I thank the Council for convening this meeting and for inviting me.

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to all Council members who addressed my Mission today with words of condolences to the family of the Ukrainian soldier who was killed yesterday after being shot in his neck when a group of gunmen stormed the Ukrainian military base in the north-east of Crimea, in Simferopol. Yesterday our Foreign Minister protested against all hostile and provocative actions of the Russian Federdation's armed forces, which caused the death of the Ukrainian soldier.

Today we observed tremendous changes in the situation in Crimea, but unfortunately those changes are not for good. As we have envisaged in other previous statements, the illegitimate referendum on the issue of the annexation of the territory of Crimea to the Russian Federation was conducted in an expedited manner on 16 March. Following immediately after the referendum, on 18 March, the President of the Russian Federation defiantly signed the agreement on its accession to the Russian Federation, which is supposed to be ratified by the Parliament of the Russian Federation on 21 March.

We consider all those acts to be illegitimate and we call upon the entire civilized world not to recognize the illegitimately declared independence of Crimea and its violent dismembering from the territory of the country.

I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights for their important briefings on the situation of human rights in Ukraine. For our part, I would like to say only that the real violation of human rights is taking place on the territory of the Crimean peninsula, which is currently under the total control of the illegitimate authorities of Crimea.

First of all, there are serious reservations about the expressed free will of the population of that region of Ukraine, because since 26 February, the armed forces of the Russian Federation have, de facto, occupied Crimea. Let me provide the Council with some of the facts of the human rights violations that occurred during the illegal referendum.

Some ballots were distributed to voters who were not registered at the voting site, including nationals of other countries. Russian citizens with a residency permit in Simferopol were able to get a ballot for the referendum and in fact to vote. But those who did not go to polling stations were visited by mobile voting teams, escorted by police, thus forcing people to vote. Journalists were banned, despite having valid credentials.

Additional voters lists included large numbers of citizens who were not qualified to vote. Contrary to existing elections provisions, ballots were issued immediately after submitting a registration application to a supplementary list, without a vote by the Commission members having taken place.

Even the results of the illegal referendum are very doubtful because of the decision made by the Crimean Tartars — who include about 300,000 people — to boycott. Ethnic Ukrainians, who make up about half a million people, and national minority populations in Crimea did not take part in the referendum. The referendum ballots indicated two questions as options, neither of which provided for maintaining the present status as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea; rather, they only referred to accession to the Russian Federation.

The personalities of foreign observers who were invited to Crimea to monitor the referendum raised serious doubts regarding impartiality.

Once again, I would like to emphasize the illegality of the referendum. Even without regard for the laws or sovereign territorial jurisdiction of Ukraine, of which the Autonomous Republic of Crimea is a subject, self-proclaimed authorities in Crimea held a referendum on 16 March that violated not only Ukraine's current legislation but also the fundamental rules of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Statute of the Council of Europe and other documents, including of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration regarding the Commonwealth of Independent States.

An abundance of evidence, including photographs and videotaped materials, eyewitness accounts of events, including those of foreign nationals, prove that the conditions of the so-called referendum failed to meet the democratic standards of referendums developed under the framework of the OSCE and the Council of Europe. The declaration of independence by the Crimean Republic is a direct consequence of the application of the use of force and threats against Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Given the Russian nuclear power status, the situation is particularly dangerous in terms of Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity and for international peace and security in general.

Accordingly, I assert that, on the basis of customary norms and international law, the international community is obliged not to recognize Crimea as a subject of international law, or any situation, treaty or agreement that may arise or be achieved by that territory.

My country expresses its strong and imperative protest against the recognition of the Russian Federation of the self-proclaimed republic, as a matter of international law. Those actions by the Russian side do not meet the international obligations of the Russian Federation in relation to its multilateral and bilateral agreements guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Ukraine, the integrity and inviolability of borders and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

The independence of that formation was declared by an illegitimate authority based on the results of the anti-constitutional referendum held under outrageous violations of the democratic standards. Russia's recognition of the self-proclaimed republic of Crimea has one single goal: to create pseudo-legitimate reasons for the annexation of the territory of Ukraine and its incorporation into the Russian Federation.

We are seriously concerned about the security of the ethnic Ukrainians, Ukrainian Tartars, Karaims and other ethnic groups living in Crimea that have not supported the so-called referendum. Their lives are seriously threatened.

In conclusion, I would like to echo my Council colleagues. Ukraine and the entire civilized world will never recognize the illegitimately declared independence of Crimea and its accession to the Russian Federation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Šimonović for their statements, as well as the Permanent Representative of Ukraine for his. This past Saturday, the international community sent a unanimous message to Russia on behalf of the Council, to whit. that the referendum it had instigated in Crimea was illegal and null and void under international law. Russia's veto changed nothing — quite the contrary. The illegal act of separating Crimea, which had been in preparation since a long time, appeared all the more blatant.

Yesterday Crimea was annexed by Russia, despite the picture painted that has fooled no one. The annexation was accompanied by flags, drums and trumpets forming a gathering wave of aggressive nationalism, the future consequences of which, once it is awoken, are unknown; nationalism that never leads to anything good, a nationalism that is used to mask or to justify attempts to suppress civil rights.

Moreover, little effort has been made to hide the use of force. The referendum was hastily organized, Russian soldiers were everywhere. Nothing was left to chance. The media was controlled at the level of describing events, international observers were recruited from among the far-right European parties and if fascists are part of the story, they are certainly not where they are claimed to be. Finally, the final results appeared so excessive that they lost all meaning. How could more than 86 per cent of the people have voted, when some communities — particularly the Crimean Tartars and Ukrainians that represent nearly 14 per cent of the population — had called for a boycott.

The United Nations was created to ensure that one would no longer witness such spectacles which dishonour the organizers and in effect reflect upon the entire international community. The rule of law must guide relations among States. The acquisition of territory resulting from the use of force or even from simple threats is simply unacceptable. That principle that Russia subscribed to in the early days is our code. I would call it the DNA of the Organization. As I stated on Saturday (see S/PV.7138), by voting against the draft resolution, it is the Charter of the United Nations that Russia has in effect vetoed.

We have just heard from Mr. Šimonović that nothing in Ukraine justified references to extremely serious attacks on human rights or minorities placed in critical situations. If any serious human rights violations have occurred, it was during the time of Yanukovych.

At least we are reassured regarding the situation throughout the country. The authorities in Kyiv are endeavoring to extend their hand to all of the various components of Ukrainian society. Nothing will justify in the long-term the current discussion about an irresponsible Government whose actions could lead to fear among its populations.

In terms of the protection of Russian and Russian language populations in Ukraine invoked by Moscow to justify its intervention in Ukraine — it is again clear that it does not correspond to the reality of the situation, nor is it a legal justification of the military occupation of a territory of a sovereign State and it becomes even less relevant when used as a pretext to extend its own borders.

We continue to recall that minorities in Ukraine, including religious and language minorities, must be protected. That falls first and foremost to the transition authorities — and that is what they are doing. The situation in Kyiv, L'viv, Donets'k or Kharkiv should not concern the Council. It is in Sevastopol and Simferopol that the law is being flouted, militiamen terrorize those who will not give in to force, and Ukrainian soldiers are being killed simply because they refuse to surrender.

Faced with a Russia that does not heed the concerns of the international community as a whole and has not even responded to the sensible propositions we have made to peacefully resolve the crisis, we are forced to respond. All that remains is to make Russia understand that we will never accept the fait accompli that it has just imposed on the ground. But we must also look to the future, with a double call on Russia.

The first is to tell it to stop there. Agents provocateurs are already at work in eastern Ukraine; let them not play the same game as in Crimea; let Russia cease its thinly veiled manoeuvres. It has already succeeded in creating lasting alienation between Ukraine and European countries; to go further wold be most grave. The second call regards the need for Moscow to open a channel of direct negotiations with Kyiv. Russia should make no mistake — Ukraine cannot be replaced with something else, as it seems to hope; no one will decide Ukraine's future except Ukraine itself.

We are already counting the first casualties of this grim misadventure. Yesterday, the Ukrainian Prime Minister announced that the conflict with Russia was now moving from a political phase to a military one. We continue to call on Russia to see reason, listen to the voice of the international community, and not drag the international community into a spiral that will sooner or later spin out of control, or at least escape the restraint of the Ukrainians.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): My delegation thanks Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for their updates on the recent developments in Ukraine. From the outset, we with to reiterate the Deputy Secretary-General's observation that the door for dialogue to resolve the crisis in Ukraine

is still open, not closed. We hope that all of the parties involved and concerned will take advantage of that.

This is the eighth time in three weeks that the Security Council has met on the situation in Ukraine. This underscores the seriousness with which the Council views the matter and its commitment to addressing issues related to international peace and security. Nigeria has consistently highlighted and stressed the need for dialogue, especially between the parties directly concerned, and for mediation by the rest of the international community to ensure that the situation in Ukraine is resolved peacefully.

We reaffirm our earlier warning that the world has too many challenges to international peace and security to contemplate adding another layer to existing ones. All peaceful means, including mediation, arbitration and dialogue, must be explored and used to the hilt by the parties concerned. Further escalation of the situation with hurtful rhetoric would only leave to grave consequences, including military confrontation, which the world can ill afford, especially when nuclear-weapon States are involved. The world would therefore not want to see any further deterioration in the situation as this could have grave implications, not just for Ukraine, but for the entire region and beyond. The Deputy Secretary-General's report was clear on that point.

With regard to the human rights situation in Ukraine, we welcome the deployment by Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović of a United Nations monitoring team throughout the country to establish the truth or otherwise or alleged human rights violations. Nigeria once again urges all parties to embrace dialogue and negotiation, and to seek a peaceful resolution to the crisis. We call on all concerned to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Yesterday, a truly historic event took place — the reunification of Russia and Crimea, which our peoples have awaited for six decades. In strict compliance with international law and democratic procedure, without outside interference and through a free referendum, the people of Crimea have fulfilled what is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and a great number of fundamental international legal documents — their right to self-determination. They turned to Russia with a request to welcome Crimea into the Russian Federation. Russia as a sovereign State agreed to the Crimean people's request. A treaty to that end has been signed between the Russian Federation and the Crimean Republic on the accession into the Russian Federation of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and the creation within the Russian Federation of two new territorial units.

The results of the referendum were quite clear. More than 82 per cent of voters participated in the voting, more than 96 per cent of whom chose in favour of reunification with Russia. This figure is the expression of the free will of the people of Crimea.

I shall now briefly depart from my text. I was stunned by how the Permanent Representative of Ukraine tried to discredit the referendum by using the arguments of Western propaganda — that those who did not want to vote were visited at home with the police in tow. A few of my Western colleagues may not know this, but my Ukrainian colleagues know very well that this is an old, tried and tested tradition in our elections. If someone cannot vote because they are too ill to come to the polling booth, members of the electoral commission will visit that person at home to afford him or her an opportunity to vote.

But I am going to stick to the topic. I will not dwell on the history of the issue in detail. The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, spelt it out yesterday in a televised appearance with which I trust all present here are familiar. I shall focus on just a few aspects. Today, out of the 2.2 million inhabitants of the Crimean peninsula, close to 1.5 million are Russian; 350,000 are Ukrainians, most of whom consider Russian to be their mother tongue; and between 290,000 and 300,0000 are Crimean Tatars, a significant proportion of whom, as shown by the referendum, also favour Russia, regardless of what others elsewhere might have suggested in the run-up to the referendum.

A historic injustice has been righted. It resulted from the arbitrary actions of the leader of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the time, Nikita Khrushchev, who, with the stroke of a pen in 1954, in violation of constitutional norms, transferred the Russian region of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was then part of the same State. He did so without informing the population of Crimea and without their consent. No one has showed any regard for the views of the

Crimeans during the break-up of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Over the years, many citizens and community activists in Crimea have repeatedly raised this issue, stating that Crimea is intrinsically Russian land and that Sevastopol is a Russian city. It is only now that the will and freely expressed choice of the Crimean has been fulfiled.

Of course, we have taken note of the reaction of a number of our Western partners who simply cannot rid themselves of the imperial colonial habits of attempting to impose their writ on other peoples and countries. Now they are nervous as their reckless geopolitical gamble in Ukraine has led to such unexpected results. The people of Crimea have spoken and made their choice, as have the people of Russia, and those choices must be accepted and respected by all.

Let me now turn to the alarming situation in Ukraine and the international assistance provided to it to overcome its pronounced internal crisis. The pseudo-friends of Ukraine need to understand once and for all that the cause of the crisis there lies not with Russia but in the irresponsible actions of individual Ukrainian political forces and their foreign mentors. The attempt to drive Ukraine, like other targeted States of the eastern partnership, to make an artificial choice between the European Union and Russia, largely provoked the deep-seated internal political crisis that led to the unconstitutional changes in Kyiv.

However, Western capitals, it would seem, continue to feel no shame about backing people who are not ready to listen or heed the views of the entire Ukrainian people and who are fully dominated by the ultra-radical, nationalist organizations Right Sector and the Freedom Party, which according to the European Parliament, is anti-Russian, anti-Semitic and xenophobic. And yet, it is with them that the European Union is planning to sign the political section of an association agreement in the near future.

In that respect, we are puzzled by Mr. Šimonović's glib, one-sided assessment of the human rights situation in Ukraine. We are especially puzzled by the fact that Mr. Šimonović referred to the Maidan snipers. Not a word was said about the evidence that provocateurs fired both on the representatives of law and order and on the opposition forces to pave the way for the use of force to seize power.

One simply cannot claim that there has been no politically motivated killing or mass torture; no kidnapping of individuals, no attacks on journalists and human rights defenders; no political detentions. One cannot claim that nationalist radicals, like the Taliban in Afghanistan, are not destroying and profaning historical sites, that there are no chilling racist incidents with anti-Russian and anti-Semitic undercurrents, backed or at least passed over in silence by those who have seized power in Kyiv. The Kyiv extremists have offered rewards for killing journalists, the self-proclaimed authorities have shut down foreign television stations, foreign correspondents have been denied all access, and they are even trying to scramble the retransmission of satellite signals.

Two scandalous incidents occurred only yesterday. Two dozen members of Parliament and activists of the Freedom Party pushed their way into the Cabinet, and in front of cameras beat up and took away the General Director of the Ukrainian First National television station, who knows where. Who is in authority in Kyiv? Neo-Nazi slogans are heard, Nazi enforcers and their Bandera-loving storm-troopers are glorified, and calls are sent out for violence against Russian-speaking Ukrainians and Russians in general, with all the signs of ethnic cleansing, and for the armed overthrow of the legal authorities. These must all be clear and obvious to anyone claiming to be objective. Instead, supposedly profound concerns are raised about the human rights situation in Crimea. As a result of the combined efforts of the people and the self-defence forces, law and order has been maintained, and Crimean authorities have guaranteed the rights of all minorities, without exception.

In that respect, we would especially like to draw attention to the fact that, pursuant to the treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea regarding succession to the Federation, there will be three equal State languages in the Republic: Ukrainian, Russian and Crimean Tartar. Crimeans, with the support of the entire Russian people, are doing all in their power to preserve peace and tranquility in Crimea. No provocation will keep them from doing so, not even such incidents as that which occurred a few days ago in Simferopol, where, in Maidan style, sniper fire from an unfinished building across from the Ukrainian military base killed an unarmed self-defence soldier and a Ukrainian national soldier. The attack by Russian forces on a Ukrainian military facility, to which the Permanent Representative referred today, simply did not take place. It was clearly a planned provocation

that was immediately seized on by Mr. Yatsenyuk and Mr. Turchynov to call on the Ukrainian military forces in Ukraine to use their weapons — against whom? Against their fellow countrymen?

Russia stands ready to work in close cooperation with all international partners that are genuinely interested in normalizing the situation in Ukraine on the basis of a broad internal Ukrainian dialogue with the participation of all responsible political forces and all regions. Establishing a multilateral mechanism for the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis could be promoted with out partners through our proposal to create an assistance group for Ukraine. We await responses to our constructive initiative.

We will continue to discuss proposals aimed at fulfilling the agreement of 21 February with the objective of restoring order, launching comprehensive constitutional reform in Ukraine, and putting an end to the provocations of the ultra-nationalist and radical forces against the Russian-speaking population and our fellow countrymen in south-eastern and other parts of Ukraine. To that end, observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe are invited as long as they implement an impartial mandate and mutually agreed modalities for such a deployment in various regions of Ukraine.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I wish to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for their briefings.

The representative of the Russian Federation began his statement extolling the so-called referendum as embodying democratic procedures and having been conducted without outside interference. Russia is known for its literary greatness, and what the Council just heard from the Russian Ambassador showed more imagination than Tolstoy or Chekhov. Russia has decided, it seems, to rewrite its borders, but it cannot rewrite the facts.

The United States rejects Russia's military intervention and land grab in Crimea. Those actions again violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Russia's own binding agreements, international law, the expressed will of most members of the Council and the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. Two days ago, President Obama and other world leaders put in place sanctions in response to Russia's blatant disregard for global opinion and the legal rights of Ukraine. We are prepared to take additional steps if Russian aggression or Russian provocations continue.

In this Chamber, when the crisis began, the Russian Federation described its intervention into Crimea as a human rights protection mission. It claimed that the recent change of Government in Ukraine constituted such a danger to ethnic Russians in Crimea that military action was justified. Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović's briefing once again illustrates that the crisis was never about protecting the rights of ethnic Russians and was always about one country's ambition to redraw its own borders.

Indeed, if there was ever a time to be concerned about human rights in Crimea, it is now. Credible reports indicate that cases of harassment have been directed by Russian allies against ethnic Ukrainians and Tatars. The Tatar community, which constitutes 12 per cent of the population, is rightly fearful of again falling victim to deportation or discrimination. The Crimean First Deputy Prime Minister has recently announced that Crimean Tatars will be evicted from some of their land, which he claimed is needed for "infrastructure projects". The body of Reshat Ahmetov, a Crimean Tatar, was discovered Sunday. He had last been seen at a protest in Simferopol on 3 March. Ahmetov's body reportedly showed signs of torture.

Russian troops are reportedly storming apartment buildings housing Ukrainian troops, border guards, veterans and their families, threatening them and demanding their immediate departure. In addition, we are seriously concerned about activists, civil society leaders, media restrictions and journalists in Crimea. Accordingly, the United States supports the rapid deployment of international observers in all parts of Ukraine. We believe it is instructive that the Government of Ukraine has repeatedly welcomed their deployment, and the Russian Federation has not.

Again today in Vienna, Russia was the lone country to block an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe monitoring mission. There, Russia was dramatically outnumbered. It was the lone dissenting voice out of 57 countries; 56, it seemed, had a different view. Russian officials say that they understand the urgency, but they vote with their feet, relying on their military forces and refusing to allow the deployment of those who could help defuse the crisis and prevent further violence. After hearing my Russian colleague's assault minutes ago on the Assistant Secretary-General's briefing, I see the logic of Russian obstruction.

Objective information is inconvenient to the Russian tale. We call on all parties to support these observer missions, including their access to Crimea.

We want to thank members of the Council for taking a strong stance on Russia's intervention in Ukraine and for making it clear that Russia stands alone in its failed, illogical and mendacious attempt to justify actions that cannot be justified. Five days ago, when the Council accurately described the Crimean separatist referendum as invalid, only a single hand rose in opposition. When the Council declared that the referendum could not form the basis for any alteration of the status of Crimea, only a single hand rose in opposition. Now the referendum has taken place, but the national and international legal status of Crimea has not changed. A thief can steal property, but that does not confer the right of ownership on the thief.

In conclusion, let me just emphasize again that what Russia has done is wrong as a matter of law, wrong as a matter of history, wrong as a matter of policy, and dangerous. What happened in Crimea cannot be recognized as valid. We must stand together denying recognition and imposing consequences for that illegal act. In doing so, we must also be very clear that what happened in Crimea cannot be repeated in other parts of Ukraine.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson, Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović and Permanent Representative of Ukraine Sergeyev for their statements.

The Security Council is meeting at a sensitive moment. The 16 March referendum was held in Crimea and has been judged as unconstitutional and has been seen as undermining the territorial integrity of Ukraine, a sovereign State Member of the United Nations. The circumstances around the vote has led to worry in the international community, which questions its legitimacy. The holding of the referendum has no doubt contributed to the worsening of the situation. Chile would reiterate the need to restore the rule of law and respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The death of a Ukrainian soldier in an assault in one of the military barracks in Crimea and the increased tensions in the eastern part of the country reveal an escalation of the crisis that has to be stopped. In that context, we value the briefings of Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Šimonović.

In truth, we are observing a growing deterioration of the situation. Chile believes that it is necessary to broaden the space for a solution through diplomacy. That is why we endorse the efforts of the Organization and, most especially, the efforts being undertaken by the Secretary-General.

Chile regrets that Mr. Šimonović and observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe were not allowed to enter Crimea. We call for the actions of the United Nations not to be impeded, with a view to ensuring timely and truthful information in order to be able to assess the human rights situation on the ground. The situation of ethnic minorities in Crimea is of concern for us, especially that of the Tatar minorities, who have started moving to other areas of Ukraine. The existence of internally displaced persons is the clearest sign of a worsening of the crisis. That fact strengthens the call of the international community to seek a negotiated solution.

It is indispensable that the Council contribute to and generate maximum restraint and moderation among both parties. Accordingly, it makes a new appeal for all sides to avoid unilateral actions that might escalate the crisis still further. Now is the time for constructive participation in an inclusive process that would guarantee the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): We thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for their briefings and for the devotion they have shown in their activities taken with respect to Ukraine.

The Republic of Korea is deeply concerned about the recent developments in that country. The Republic of Korea will not recognize the referendum in Crimea nor the annexation of Crimea by Russia. We call on Russia and the Crimean authorities to refrain from further hasty actions. We urge them to immediately enter into meaningful discussions with the Ukrainian Government and the international community, with a view to finding a peaceful political solution.

Implications of any boundary alterations on the existing international order must be fully taken into account. We hope that space exists for a negotiated way forward. In that context, we greatly value the ongoing

mediation efforts by the international community, particularly those of the Secretary-General. We look forward to the continued constructive role of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in that regard.

Once again, we reiterate our firm support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine. All the relevant international and bilateral agreements, especially the Charter of the United Nations and the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, must be fully observed. It is also vital that the rights of all persons in Ukraine, especially of minorities, be protected. The future of Ukraine should be considered and decided upon based only upon the will and aspirations of all Ukrainians themselves, without any intervention or influence by outside forces.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I wish to thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović for their respective briefings. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Ukraine for his participation in today's meeting of the Security Council.

Argentina is following with great concern the unfolding of the situation in Ukraine. The delegation of Argentina once again reiterates the fundamental importance of adhering to the principles that we have all subscribed to as Members of the United Nations.

For Argentina, it is essential to respect the primacy of the principle of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of all States. Therefore, in speaking in support of the draft resolution that was put to a vote on 15 March, I said that my country had sustained that principle throughout its history, even before the existence of the United Nations, and it will continue steadfastly to do so.

Argentina does not comment on the internal developments in Ukraine that have led to the current institutional crisis in the country because we understand that all countries should refrain from intervening militarily, economically or politically in the internal affairs of other States and should adjust its actions so that they are in strict compliance to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. In that context, we urge that human rights and international humanitarian law be scrupulously observed and that the rights of all minorities — be they ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious — be upheld.

We are concerned about the past violence and the current violence — and the possibility that it might worsen. We regret that, despite repeated calls, the rhetoric of confrontation has not been abandoned in Ukraine. It is incumbent upon all of us to refrain from encouraging dissent or escalating confrontations that could become a threat to international peace and security. Indeed, it is the most influential actors who should be calling for constructive diplomacy.

Finally, we support the mediation efforts that are being undertaken by various United Nations officials, as well as the good offices of the Secretary-General. We understand that this situation cannot be resolved by unilateral acts. We therefore stress that actions that complicate the situation and that lead us further away from a political and peaceful solution to the crisis must be avoided.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): Thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting on the situation in Ukraine. It shows the seriousness of the situation and the commitment of the Security Council in the quest for a diplomatic solution to the crisis. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Šimonović for their respective briefings on the political, security and human rights situation in Ukraine.

Rwanda is still concerned about the prevailing rhetoric in Ukraine and the region and the continued demonstrations and violence in the cities of eastern Ukraine. Something needs to be done, and that begins with a commitment from all parties, with a sense of urgency, to resume dialogue, in order to avoid further escalation of the situation.

We continue to commend the role of the United Nations in that regard. We look forward to the visit of the Secretary-General to the Russian Federation and Ukraine, scheduled for tomorrow, 20 March, and we hope that his visit will help all the parties involved and regional organizations to find a political and diplomatic solution that will benefit Ukrainians and all the peoples of the region. We welcome the deployment of a United Nations human rights monitoring team in Ukraine, and we count on all stakeholders to extend full cooperation to the team. We indeed believe that only an independent body will be able to objectively establish the facts on alleged human rights violations.

Rwanda has been calling for constructive efforts to de-escalate the situation, and we continue to advocate for

a political and diplomatic solution to the conflict, with the engagement of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union and the Russian Federation at the international level, and for inclusive talks at the national level among all Ukrainian parties that ensure equal participation by all communities in the country while protecting minorities. In the meantime, we call on all Ukrainian parties to respect the rule of law and exercise maximum restraint. We urge the regional and international actors to avoid any diplomatic, economic, political or even military move that would further escalate the situation.

In conclusion, let me stress that the Security Council, which is the world's only body in charge of the maintenance of international peace and security, must work towards restoring its own unity, in order to be able to defend the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of a United Nations State Member while addressing the interests of all the countries of the region.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing and Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for his statement. I also thank Ukraine Ambassador Sergeyev.

As we know, five days ago, the Council sought to adopt a draft resolution on Ukraine reaffirming fundamental principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. The draft resolution was opposed by only one State: Russia. The message of Council members to Russia, reflecting the views of the broader international community, nevertheless, remains clear. It must comply with international law, take active steps to de-escalate the crisis and engage in dialogue towards a peaceful resolution of it.

But the fact is that Russia has steadfastly ignored that message. It has moved to annex Crimea on the basis of a referendum that was manifestly unlawful and illegitimate, not least because it was carried out while Russian forces exercised effective control over Crimea. President Putin's signature of a decree recognizing Crimean independence and of a purported treaty with Crimean leaders and the presidential approval of a draft bill on the annexation of Crimea do not validate the referendum, nor do they provide any legitimate basis for Russia's acquisition of part of the territory of Ukraine. Indeed, Russia's actions are a clear violation of the fundamental principles of international law, which were contained in the draft resolution it vetoed on Saturday: respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the illegality of the acquisition of territory by the threat or use of force. Those remain the international community's touchstone, and the international community will not recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Russia has further strengthened its military control of Crimea in recent days, dramatically escalating tensions. Incidents involving the use of armed force, the occupation of military bases and the killing of a Ukrainian soldier and the wounding of another significantly increase the stakes and make a descent into conflict more likely.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatsenyuk has sought an immediate meeting of Ministers of Defence of the parties to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which provided security guarantees to Ukraine, in order to prevent further escalation of the crisis, and we urge Russia to respond positively to that request. He has sent Ukraine's First Deputy Prime Minister and the Acting Defence Minister to Crimea to de-escalate the crisis. It is crucial that that direct dialogue take place.

The Secretary-General's travel to Moscow and Kyiv over the next few days is clearly welcome, and we urge all parties to engage in constructive dialogue with him.

In pursuing its current course of action, Russia has chosen a path towards isolation. In doing so, it undermines its own standing, credibility and relations with other States and increasingly poses a threat to security and stability in the region. Inevitably, there are consequences for its unlawful action. In addition to measures put in place by others, the Australian Government announced, on 19 March, that it would impose targeted measures against individuals who have been instrumental in the Russian threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. We have not taken those steps lightly and have done so with regret, only after repeatedly urging Russia to de-escalate and engage in diplomatic dialogue to resolve the crisis.

An important first step for Russia will be to recognize the need for and support the deployment of monitors on the ground. We encourage Russia to engage constructively in support of an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring mission to Ukraine. Such a mission should be deployed as a matter of priority.

Given the allegations raised by Russia about serious infringement of the human rights of Russian speakers in Crimea and elsewhere in Ukraine, it is obviously important that those allegations continue to be independently assessed, especially as the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities found no evidence of violations or threats to Russian speakers in Crimea during her recent visit. As Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović has just reported to us, the violations he has learned of are neither widespread nor systematic. On the other hand, Crimea's Tatar community clearly feel threatened. Mr. Šimonović has noted there are credible reports that a Tatar activist has been tortured and murdered. There are also reports that Ukrainian civil society activists have been abducted. Those violations must cease. Ongoing human rights monitoring is essential, and we welcome the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights team that is already being done and their continued deployment, but such monitoring must also take place in Crimea.

In conclusion, we are obviously at a critical point for Ukraine and the region and for the integrity of the rules-based international order itself. All Member States have a direct interest in the preservation of that order.

As the Deputy Secretary-General has underlined again today, the crisis must be resolved peacefully through diplomatic means and direct dialogue. Such a resolution must respect Ukraine's unity and territorial integrity. It is up to Russia to commit to finding such a solution. It is not too late for it to turn from the deliberate path of provocation and isolation that it has taken.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for their respective briefings. China has been closely following developments in the situation in Ukraine.

The Security Council has repeatedly taken up the question of Ukraine. China has explicitly stated its principled position on the issues concerned. Respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States is China's consistent position. China has taken an fair and impartial approach in addressing the question of Ukraine. We will continue to promote peaceful dialogue and to play a more constructive role in seeking a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine. China has put forward the following proposals in order to address the Ukrainian crisis.

An international coordinating mechanism comprising all parties concerned should be established as soon as possible in order to explore political ways to address the situation in Ukraine. In the meantime, all parties should refrain from taking any action that may further exacerbate tensions. International financial institutions should start to explore various possibilities to help Ukraine maintain its economic and financial stability. In our view, a political solution to the Crimean issue should be found within the framework of law and order.

All parties concerned should exercise restraint and refrain from any action that could cause the situation to further deteriorate. The international community should make constructive efforts to defuse tension.

China supports today's trip by Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to the countries concerned to conduct mediation. China hopes that the international community will continue to make constructive efforts to defuse tension.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing. We welcome the Secretary-General's intent to travel to Moscow and Kyiv this week. We hope that his visit will help to persuade President Putin to step back, to de-escalate the siutation, to fulfil Russia's obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, to allow the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and United Nations monitors full access to Crimea, and to engage in dialogue with Ukraine.

We also thank Mr. Šimonović for his briefing. It is inexcusable that he was denied access to Crimea, but we applaud his efforts to gather information from the peninsula via other means. His report on the extent of human rights violations in Crimea is of serious concern. Cases of arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, ill-treatment, disappearances and population displacements directly contradict Russia's claims to the contrary.

We share Mr. Šimonović's concerns about the gross human rights violations that took place under the previous Ukrainian Government. In that context, we welcome the new Ukrainian Government's request for United Nations monitors to investigate those concerns and its commitment to reflect Ukraine's rich linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity. We urge the rapid

deployment of the United Nations monitors across the country.

Last Saturday, 14 Council members underlined their commitment to Ukraine's unity and territorial integrity (see S/PV.7138). Russia was urged to distance itself from the referendum set to take place the next day in Crimea. Our aim was to avoid further escalation and to ask Russia to heed the views of the international community.

Russia has rejected that message. It rejected it on Saturday by vetoing a draft resolution that carried the overwhelming support of the Council. Yesterday, following the referendum, it underlined its disregard for our appeals for calm and for de-escalation by announcing new laws to incorporate Crimea into the Russian Federation. The Permanent Representative of Russia spoke about that process being in compliance with international law, without outside interference and through a democratic process. It is hard to know which of those three assertions is the biggest lie.

Sunday's referendum was a mockery of democratic practice. It was illegal under the Ukrainian Constitution, arranged at 10 days' notice, met none of the OSCE standards for democratic elections, was held under Russian military occupation and gave the people of Crimea no option to vote for the status quo. Neither the referendum nor the succession of increasingly desperate, contradictory and inconsistent legal arguments put forward by Russia can conceal the stark reality of that country's actions. Russia has annexed part of the sovereign territory of an independent State Member of the United Nations through the use of military force.

Russia claims not to be bound by any of its previous obligations and commitments in respect of Ukraine, including the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, on the grounds that it does not regard the new Government in Ukraine as legitimate. However, treaties and international agreements are between States, not Governments. A change in Government in Kyiv does not absolve Russia from its international obligations and commitments. We are witnessing the illegal behaviour of a large country bullying its neighbours, disregarding international norms and unilaterally adjusting internationally recognized borders to its own advantage.

Yesterday, in his speech to the Federation Council, President Putin said: "In the hearts and conscience of the people, Crimea has always been, and remains, an inalienable part of Russia". He went on to add that, because Crimea was a strategic territory, it needed to be under the strong and stable sovereignty of Russia. Now, at last, after weeks of denial, Russia's real motives for its military adventurism have been admitted. There are plenty of lessons from history about where that kind of extraordinary logic leads. One only has to think back to the 1930s to recognize the dangers of a complacent international response when such behaviour occurs.

The United Nations system and the framework of international norms that it embodies were the response of our forefathers to a global conflict that resulted from lawless aggression. The United Nations was designed to provide security to us all by preventing the subjugation of any State. We all therefore have an interest in upholding the international framework and norms that the United Nations represents. Russian actions throw into doubt the credibility of that international order. That is why they should be clearly condemned and why Russia must now face further consequences for its actions.

Russia cannot be granted the impunity to disregard international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Even at this late stage, Russia has the option to change course, to heed the message of the international community and to engage in dialogue with Ukraine. Last week, in the Council, we all heard the Ukrainian Prime Minister offer to open up such a dialogue with Russia (see S/PV.7134). Yet, so far, even that basic step has been rejected.

The situation in Ukraine and the region is serious. Yesterday, another threshold was passed when a Ukrainian serviceman was killed during the storming of a Ukrainian military compound in Crimea by forces aligned with Russia. There are credible reports of Russian-inspired provocations across eastern and southern Ukraine. We praise the continuing and remarkable restraint of the Ukrainian military. However, such actions only underline how close we are to a further dramatic escalation.

The issue extends far beyond Ukraine's imperilled borders. The issue before us is about respect for bilateral and international treaties. It is about upholding the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Those are the frameworks on which we all rely and that Russia is challenging. We have a collective responsibility to defend everything that we have worked so hard to build over the past 70 years.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I, too, would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson and Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for their briefings and our colleague from Ukraine for his statement.

Last Sunday, a hastily crafted illegal referendum took place in Ukraine's Crimea — a referendum held in a region cut off from its mainland and the rest of the world by another country's armed forces and under a heavy barrage of aggressive anti-Ukrainian propaganda.

Representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and key United Nations national and regional organizations with outstanding experience in human rights monitoring and the organization and observation of elections were all prevented from entering Crimea. The plebiscite was organized in a record short period of time, probably a first in the practice of referendums, without nationwide preparations or consultations. Not a single credible international observer was present to verify and ascertain that this hurried referendum was free and fair. Those facts alone are sufficient to raise alarms about the quality of the referendum and its fraudulence.

At the same time, notably while representatives of major international organizations, monitors and observers were prevented from entering Crimea, more than 100 so-called "independent referendum observers", as our French colleague has stated, who were well-established hard-line nationalists, Nazi sympathizers, deniers of the Holocaust, anti-semites, deniers of the massacre of Srebrenica and Islamophobes — hardly a company to keep for those who claim to protect Europe, Ukraine and Crimea from fascism — were able to observe and to ascertain that allegedly the referendum was fine and fair.

The indigenous Tatar population, for whom Crimea is the only place on Earth they can call home and whose massive deportation by Stalin in cattle cars is still very much alive in their collective memory, called to boycott the election as contrary to their desire to be an integral part of Ukraine. How about their right to self-determination?

The so-called referendum is nothing but an undisguised land grab and a blatant violation by Russia of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements and commitments. A country which should have been a guarantor of Ukraine's sovereignty, as per the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, breached its legal responsibility towards Ukraine to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity in exchange for its renunciation of nuclear weapons. How does that bode for the non-proliferation regime?

Sunday's referendum is nothing else but a fraudulent sham whose sole purpose was to rubber-stamp the illegal annexation of a part of Ukraine. As such, it cannot be recognized by the international community. Lithuania once again calls on all States to reject that act, not to recognize the illegal joining of a part of the territory of sovereign Ukraine to the Russian Federation and to reaffirm their support for the principles of the United Nations Charter and the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

How deeply ironic is the fact that, carried out under the false pretext of protecting human and minority rights, the aggression against Crimea is carried out by pro-Russian militants with Moscow's support, causing serious and repeated human rights violations against the Crimean population through incitement against Ukrainians, extreme censorship, shutting down media outlets and press hubs, cases of arbitrary arrest, detention and enforced disappearances, routine attacks against journalists, vandalism, beatings and other ill-treatment?

Furthermore, the outcome of the referendum and the rushed admittance of Crimea into the Russian fold will further infringe upon the rights of large numbers of Crimea's inhabitants, who will be forced to make heart-rending choices regarding their loyalty to the Ukrainian State and their citizenship, with serious consequences for their families, their property rights and their future.

One country appropriating at will a part of a neighbouring country is a profoundly disturbing signal to everyone that, once again, territories are up for grabs and that the international norms guaranteeing the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of States can be rewritten by force. Who will be next?

Mr. Omaish (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Jordan would like to express its concerns following the events of the crisis in Ukraine, especially in Crimea, given the fact that efforts undertaken to achieve a peaceful solution have unfortunately not yet been successful. We would like to reiterate the need to protect the sovereignty of Ukraine, its territorial integrity and its political independence.

All territories and regions of Ukraine, including Crimea, fall under Ukrainian sovereignty. That fact is recognized by the international community and established by international law and, of course, the Charter of the United Nations, which is further complemented by relevant international treaties, such as the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 and the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation of 1997.

We wish to reaffirm the fact that the instrument that governs all regions and parts of Ukraine's territory is the Constitution, which guarantees its territorial integrity and unity throughout all regions and parts of the country. That is why it is simply unacceptable to split off a part of its territory and have another country annex it. The international community should spare no effort to tackle the crisis and to encourage the parties to reach a solution that would protect their legitimate interests and rights, which would result, of course, in a return of Crimea to Ukrainian control.

There is also a need to establish the necessary guarantees to protect the interests of the various sides. If ever an agreement were to be concluded to put an end to the crisis, it should include guarantees of minorities' rights in Ukraine. We urge the United Nations to use its good offices to reconcile the positions of the two parties and to come up with a mechanism that would enable us to initiate dialogue and make progress.

Clearly, the time has come to set up an international contact group to achieve that objective, to work with all parties on the ground and to cooperate with the various monitoring and observation groups, which could be deployed to verify the situation throughout all regions in Ukraine, including Crimea. The various parties to the crisis should refrain from actions that would lead to escalation. They should give pride of place to reconciliation, common sense and logic, and work with international organizations within the framework of the existing forums. Such an effort would spare the world from the negative consequences of the crisis and its impact on international peace and security.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Šimonović for their briefings. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Ukraine for his statement.

Chad is alarmed by what is taking place in Ukraine, including in Crimea. We note with a great deal of concern that, despite the repeated calls by the international community, in particular the Security Council, the undermining of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine continues.

We reaffirm once again that we are committed to the unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and we urge all parties to comply with the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including Article 2. We ask all the relevant parties to give pride of place to a peaceful settlement. We support the good offices of the Secretary-General aimed at forging direct dialogue between the two parties to achieve a political solution.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Luxembourg.

I thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for their briefings. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, Ambassador Yuriy Sergeyev, for his statement.

It cannot be emphasized enough — the referendum held on 16 March in the Crimea violated the Constitution of Ukraine, which provides that the territory of Ukraine is indivisible and inviolable. In addition, the election was held in conditions that forfeited all legitimacy. Crimea was occupied and cut off from the rest of Ukraine, journalists and members of civil society were intimidated, and media freedom was severely hampered. Representatives of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) who had been invited by the Ukrainian Government were denied access to the Crimea.

The international community in no way recognizes the result of this illegal and unconstitutional referendum. Similarly, the international community does not recognize any measure to integrate the Ukrainian Autonomous Republic of Crimea within the Russian Federation via the referendum. We welcome the very broad convergence of views on this issue in the Security Council.

Russia's actions on Ukrainian territory over the past three weeks flagrantly violate international law, particularly the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki Final Act. They contradict the commitments made by Russia regarding Ukraine in the framework of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership signed in 1997 between Russia and Ukraine.

Luxembourg is deeply concerned about the rising tensions in Crimea caused by the illegal presence of armed Russian forces outside their authorized area. It is urgently necessary to defuse the crisis through military de-escalation, starting with the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces to their pre-crisis permanent areas of deployment. We welcome the calm and restraint shown by the Ukrainian authorities to date in the face of the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country. However, we consider the death of a Ukrainian officer killed yesterday by bullets during the attack on a military base in Simferopol of greatest concern. Today, there are reports of attacks on Ukrainian armed forces bases, including the headquarters of the Ukrainian navy in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. In the present context, every incident could become the spark that ignites the fire.

To address the crisis, we believe that the United Nations has a role to play in close cooperation with the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other organizations. We regret that it was not possible for the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights to visit Crimea. Nevertheless, Mr. Šimonović's briefing, based on the evidence he collected, tends to confirm the observation made two weeks ago by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. The main reason given by the Russia to legitimize its actions — threats to the rights of Russian speakers and communities in Crimea — have turned out to be unfounded. It was not the actions of the Government in Kyiv or the Ukrainian authorities but Russia's military escalation that fostered a climate of impunity and an increase in human rights violations in Crimea. The situation threatens seriously to disrupt the balance between the various communities that have coexisted peacefully until now in Crimea.

We welcome the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to quickly deploy observers, under the "Rights up front" action plan of the Secretary-General, to monitor the human rights situation of throughout Ukrainian territory. The observers can establish the facts and report objectively in order to halt the spread of unfounded allegations geared to exacerbate tensions. We hope that the team of observers will soon be fully operational and that it will also go to Crimea and eastern Ukraine. In the same vein, we hope that the presence of the international community throughout Ukraine will be reinforced as soon as possible by the establishment of a special OSCE observer mission. Its implementation should be delayed no further.

In general, we encourage the United Nations to pursue its good offices in the crisis between Ukraine and Russia. In that respect, we applaud the visit planned by the Secretary-General to Moscow and Kyiv in the next few days. Even if they have not yet borne fruit, diplomatic efforts must continue intensively to achieve a solution that respects the political independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): During the course of our discussions, a number of my colleagues have given themselves poetic license. I am especially forced to return to the statement made by the representative of the United States. Ms. Powers started with a reference to Tolstoy and Chekhov and finished by lowering herself to the level of the tabloid press. It is simply unacceptable to listen to such insults addressed to our country. If the delegation of the United States of America expects our cooperation in the Security Council on other issues, Ms. Powers must understand that quite clearly.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of Ukraine has asked to make a further statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): I would like to thank you personally, Madam President, for convening this meeting. I would like to thank all the members of the Council for inviting me to take part in it. I am grateful to the Deputy Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for their briefings. I would like to extend my gratitude to all who, in their statements, expressed support for the territorial integrity of my country and raised strong objections concerning the illegitimacy of the referendum in Crimea. I will now say a few words in Russian, as is becoming customary.

(*spoke in Russian*)

I should like to comment on a few elements of the statement of my colleague from the Russian Federation. It is very complicated and to a large extent unpleasant to make comments regarding some of the statements made by my Russian colleague. It is very difficult to comment on what is blatantly false because it puts one in a position of having justify oneself.

Regarding the freedom of expression and access to information in Ukraine, does Mr. Churkin know the difference between freedom of expression and access to information in Ukraine and in Russia? All the webcasts of the Security Council are broadcast in Ukraine on all channels, without editing. Not everything that was heard here today will sound pleasant to the ears of Ukrainians. There were a great many recommendations made here today that contain elements critical of Ukraine, but we are ready to listen to all of that.

The only things that are heard in the Russian media are Russian statements. Yesterday, I met with a women's non-governmental organization that participated in the Women's Forum at the United Nations. One of the women was from Odessa, another from Donetsk and the third was from Chernihiv. All were Russian speakers. They turned to me and asked: "How can the whole world, watching on television, be told such lies as are heard in many of the statements made by representatives of the Russian Federation?" How could I answer them?

The means justify the ends? That is probably the only answer.

I have two comments that it simply behoves me to make. My Russian colleague characterized as blasphemy the decision of the Ukrainian authorities yesterday to allow our military in Crimea to use weapons in self-defence, following the death of their fellow soldier. Today, we have heard that it is blasphemy because they are raising their weapons against their fellow countrymen. This is odd. The feeling one is left with is that it is Ukraine that has launched an attack by bringing its forces in, as opposed to the truth, which is that Russia three weeks ago deployed its forces throughout the sovereign territory of Ukraine — and this at the beginning of the Orthodox Easter, at the time when believers were to gather. I believe that there is an excess of cynicism and untruth here.

(*spoke in English*)

Ukraine keeps saying that we are ready for dialogue. We started with a request to our Russian colleagues to hold consultations under the bilateral agreement. We invited all guarantors under the Budapest Memorandum to convene a meeting as provided for by that document. The Russian Federation refused. We are ready for further dialogue, and we acknowledge the recent proposal made by the Russian Federation. But what is disappointing is that these are not proposals; they are ultimatums and demands as to how Ukraine should build its future. We do not like these ultimatums because they are open interference in our domestic affairs. We would like to have dialogue.

We applaud the efforts of the Secretary-General over recent weeks and we expect that his meetings in Moscow in Kyiv will lead to some positive developments. I thank my colleagues in the Chamber for their support.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to take the floor to make an additional statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I do not want to exchange polemics with my Ukrainian colleagues and I do not think there is going to be a lengthy discussion, but there are two comments that I wish to make.

What is cynicism? Cynicism is attempting to provoke a conflict by shooting both at one's own side and the other side. Today, a number of my colleagues referred to an alleged attack on a Ukrainian base. I can tell the Council again that there has been no attack on any base. There were not even any Russian soldiers present. Those who were present were unarmed members of the self-defence forces, wearing only bullet-proof jackets, and a sniper posted on a nearby building shot, killed and injured one person on each side. Immediately, the leaders in Kyiv come out with a statement saying that there is now a need to fire on Russian soldiers. Now that is real cynicism.

Cynicism is what we saw in the Maidan, where there was an attempt to provoke the violent overthrow of the authorities by shooting at all sides and kill as many protestors as possible, as Mr. Šimonović said today. A professional fired on the crowds, and everyone saw where the shots came from. One well-equipped and well-trained sniper came from the headquarters of the so-called Maidan commandant. That is cynicism.

Finally, let me turn to the so-called ultimatum. I do not know why our Ukrainian colleagues refer to this as an ultimatum. Our Western partners have started to consider how to extricate themselves from the crisis in Ukraine and to come up with their own recipes to do so. We in response provided them with our vision of how we could extricate ourselves from the crisis in Ukraine to ensure that all regions feel at rest and secure. The very core of our proposal is entirely in keeping with the agreement of 21 February. There

needs to be a constitutional process whereby all regions would feel that their rights were being defended within the framework of the Ukrainian State. That is not an ultimatum to Kyiv, but something we have discussed with our partners. In my statement today, I said that we stand ready to continue such dialogue.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of France has asked to take the floor to make an additional statement.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I believe that we cannot talk nonsense here and that we cannot let the representative of the Russian Federation lecture us to the effect that Russia has made proposals intended to settle the conflict. In reality, Russia's proposals are simple. What is mine is mine — that is to say, Crimea — and we can negotiate on what is yours — that is to say, Ukrainian sovereignty. That is the Russian proposal. The Russian keep repeating that they are ready to talk about whatever is left of Ukraine, but Crimea is over. We say no; let us be clear. On such bases, we cannot have a dialogue founded on international legal order. We did not reject the Russian proposal. Quite simply, we rejected any proposal that boils down to forcing us to accept the annexation of Crimea. It is simple. We are ready to negotiate on the basis of international law. International law means the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to take the floor to make an additional statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I have a feeling that there is something in our proposal that our French colleague does not like. That is the impression I am left with. But we did not submit it as a draft resolution of the Security Council. It was discussed by Secretary of State Kerry and Minister Lavrov in great detail. They tabled their documents; we tabled ours. What is unusual about any of this? I do not see anything unusual in all of this, and if there is something that he does not like, let us sit down and discuss the specific points that you do not like. That is standard diplomatic process.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.